

## **Appendix L: White Center Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area**



## **Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan 2010 - 2012**

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Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management  
February 2009

## **I. Introduction**

This document is an application by King County to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for authorization of a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) for the White Center neighborhood. Through this NRSA designation, King County seeks to create economic opportunities in White Center by stimulating the reinvestment of human and economic capital and economically empowering low to moderate-income residents. Approval by HUD will assist King County and its residents and stakeholders in revitalizing the community and encouraging partnerships among public, private and community-based organizations that will create unique and innovative economic and community development projects and programs for the area.

King County's Housing and Community Development Program (HCD) in the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) on behalf of the King County Housing Consortium, and the Office of Strategic Planning and Performance Management are the lead county agencies involved in the development of the strategy for the White Center neighborhood. The county has also engaged stakeholders of the community including the White Center Community Development Association (WCCDA), White Center Chamber of Commerce, North Highline Unincorporated Council and the King County Housing Authority (KCHA).

Several factors are used to determine the boundaries of the strategy area. These include: 1) a high percentage of low to moderate-income residents, 2) the primarily residential character of the area, and 3) the area is contiguous. Additionally, King County considers the capacity of organizations and groups in the White Center community to undertake the planned strategies that meet the needs and desires of the community for specific actions directed toward economic development.

The proposed strategy area is located within the White Center Census Designated Place (CDP), a large urban unincorporated area bordered by the cities of Seattle to the north and west, Burien and SeaTac to the south and Tukwila to the south and east. King County government is the governing body and provides local services including police, solid waste, public health, planning and permitting and parks/open space. The King County Department of Transportation (DOT), Transit Division provides transit service and related facilities. The area is also served by City of Seattle Public Utilities and special districts for fire, water and sewer. Public schools are under the administration of the Highline School District and the King County Library system provides public libraries. Public housing is provided by the KCHA.

This NRSA follows HUD guidelines and includes details on neighborhood and demographic criteria, community consultation, assessment, promotion of economic empowerment and specific performance measures. Some of the information has been divided into activities undertaken prior to and during 2004, and those undertaken from 2004 - 2009.

## II. History and Background

The White Center area has always been one of transition. Like many neighborhoods in the greater Seattle area, residential and commercial growth in White Center developed as a result of streetcar suburb expansion during the period of 1912 to 1933. However, the area was never annexed into the city of Seattle as were other similar neighborhoods, and as a result, White Center did not experience the benefits of redevelopment. Consequently, this neighborhood has retained much of its early character and has suffered from a lack of investment. The history of the White Center area can be divided into five distinct periods:

- Historic American Indian presence (pre 1870)
- Pioneer development/logging (1870-1911)
- Railway line and early commercial development (1912-1929)
- Depression and war years (1930-1945)
- Post-war development (1945-1959).

The railway line development and post World War II periods were the primary periods of growth and development in the area. The railway development spurred the creation of the commercial district. Commercial buildings were constructed on land that was platted concurrent with the railway franchises. Most of these structures were relatively simple in design, usually one-story structures with shared walls. However, some two-story commercial buildings with ornate designs were built. Storefronts usually had large expansive windows and awnings along the entire façade. The facades, windows, entry ways and zero setbacks gave the business district a drive-up, and some-what pedestrian friendly atmosphere.

The influx of workers into the area caused a demand for housing. During World War II, a large number of very simple homes were built to house workers. Those homes were initially thought to be temporary, but eventually were acquired by the KCHA as Park Lake Homes public housing. In addition, the land around the business district was platted and subdivided into urban scale residential lots. Most of the homes built were modest single story homes, within walking or short driving distance of the business district.

After the post-war era, the building of State Highway 509 in the 1950's reduced the traffic through White Center and many businesses moved out of the area. The area became dominated by single family residences and small-scale commercial development was concentrated within three distinctly defined business districts: White Center, Salmon Creek, and Top Hat.

Today the area is primarily residential. The housing in the area is predominately modest single family residences and over 53 percent of the housing is owner-occupied. Approximately 28 percent of the housing is multi-family, and much of the multi-family housing stock is under the ownership of the KCHA. About 31 percent of the area's rental housing is subsidized as public housing or by a housing voucher. The median age of the housing stock in the area is about 46 years. Compared to the rest of King County, housing costs are relatively affordable.

The commercial districts have struggled in the post-war era and have continually adapted to the demographic changes occurring in the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Recent immigrants from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and East Africa, and second and third generation business and property owners are shaping the character of these business districts and their surrounding residential neighborhoods. Business signage, decorations and advertising are in a variety of languages and are distinctive from each other. Retail and service businesses market and sell to a socially, economically and ethnically diverse group of consumers.

As with housing costs, rents for commercial space in the area have been lower than the King County average commercial rates. The lower commercial rents have supported an “incubator” environment in the area, allowing small businesses to get a foothold. As in other areas of the Puget Sound region, there was a recent increase in housing costs and rents for commercial spaces caused by new construction and the rise in the general economy in the mid 2000s. However, those price increases stopped, and in some cases declined, in late 2008 and in 2009 as the nation’s economy fell into deep recession. Prices appear to be stabilizing at this point, keeping housing and commercial space relatively affordable, but it is unclear as to when they might begin rising again.

### **III. Community Vision**

From 1992 - 1993 over 50 community meetings were held in the White Center area to create a forward vision for the community. To reach as many residents and stakeholders as possible, several of these meetings were co-sponsored by community-based organizations. These organizations targeted their constituents and provided supportive services including interpretation services and childcare. This process resulted in one of the first land use plans to be adopted under the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan.

The White Center Planning Area was created, and in November 1994 the county adopted *Creating the Future: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning*.<sup>1</sup> This document was a six to 10 year action plan for the area and was based upon a vision statement and strategies identified by White Center citizens. The plan targeted public and private resources in the county to help citizens reach the goals identified in three areas:

- Health and Human Services
- Economic and Community Development
- Environmental Protection.

The plan identified 1) the boundaries of the planning area, 2) public and private resources and services for the area, and 3) actions to be taken by the public and private sector to assist the citizens in attaining the identified goals.

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<sup>1</sup> *Creating the Future: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning*, King County, November 1994.

#### IV. Community Planning and Consultation

##### A. Planning and Community Development from 1994 - 2003

Community and economic development planning for the White Center area has been an on-going process since the White Center plan of 1994. A progress report was produced in February 1996,<sup>2</sup> with an update that followed in 2001.<sup>3</sup> These reports detailed the progress and accomplishments on the goals, strategies and vision outlined in the 1994 plan and what remained to be accomplished.

As a follow up to the 1994 plan and the 1996 progress report, King County partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to form the White Center Resident Leadership Council (WCRLC) in 2001. The purpose of this effort was to gather together 50 community leaders representing all of the major constituencies of the White Center area and help them move forward in carrying out community planning.

The WCRLC leaders discussed the area's needs, assets and priorities and their visions for a healthy and viable White Center Community. Meetings were held at least twice a month from January to June of 2001. Staff members from HCD and the King County Office of Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) were very active in working with the WCRLC on housing and economic development planning issues during this period. From these meetings the following priorities were established:<sup>4</sup>

- Create a Community Development Corporation to promote economic development and affordable housing
- Concentrate resources on the main street revitalization for the White Center business district
- Support the expansion the King County Jobs Initiative
- Preserve and/or create affordable housing in the area
- Create a neighborhood advisory/advocacy group
- Develop a community cultural center
- Create a community school at White Center Heights Elementary.

During the period of time in which the WCRLC was meeting, the KCHA announced its intention to seek a HOPE VI grant to revitalize most of Park Lake Homes, a very large complex of old World War II public housing in White Center. The KCHA sought and received HOPE VI funding to complement the WCRLC work, and

<sup>2</sup> Progress Report: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning, King County, February 1996.

<sup>3</sup> 2000 Final Update: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning, King County, January 2001.

<sup>4</sup> White Center Community Development Investment Plan, King County and Annie E. Casey Foundation, September 2001.

included the White Center community in its planning for the two HOPE VI applications (Park Lake I, now Greenbridge, and Park Lake II), as well as the implementation of the projects. The WCRLC is very supportive of the HOPE VI projects and several WCRLC members continue to participate in the HOPE VI community meetings. King County staff has also worked on the HOPE VI project in its various stages and King County is a major contributor of funds to the project.

To further support the WCRLC effort, and to analyze and develop a plan for the White Center business district, King County solicited consultants to prepare a study of the strengths and weaknesses of the White Center business district in 2002. A report<sup>5</sup> was produced after the consultants held workshops with, and interviewed and received feedback from White Center business and property owners, with the assistance of the WCCDA and King County. This report provided the county and the community with suggested follow-up activities to improve the business district.

#### B. Planning and Community Development Efforts since 2004

While several community plans were developed during 1992-2004, King County has focused its recent efforts on implementing the strategies and actions identified in these plans and in the economic empowerment plan of the proposed NRSA. These efforts include:

- The WCCDA was created in February, 2002. The WCCDA is a nonprofit organization that provides ongoing economic and housing development expertise to the local community and partners in the development of economic and housing development projects. King County was instrumental in the creation and early operation of the WCCDA.
- Since 2003, King County has provided technical assistance to White Center businesses from two sources. First, a King County economic development specialist assisted firms with marketing, finance, and operational issues from 2003 until 2007 when funding reductions curtailed this effort. Second, King County helped initiate and fund the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Highline Community College in 2003. The Business Development Specialist at the SBDC provides specialized business assistance to White Center businesses.
- In 2004, King County funded the University of Washington (UW) Storefront Studio to establish a design studio where UW architecture students worked with the WCCDA and business/property owners to create new streetscape and storefront designs. The efforts produced a document, known as The White Center Main-Street Use and Design Guidelines. The guidelines have been used to promote the commercial district as a viable place for business

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<sup>5</sup> White Center Business District Analysis and Revitalization Plan, Economic Consulting Services, Kasprisin-Pettinari Design, InsightGIS and Transportation Solutions, Inc., September 2002.

opportunities, while retaining notable historic and cultural aspects contributing to its small-town, main street character.

- In 2005 and 2006, the county loaned \$142,000 to four property owners for façade improvements to 12 storefronts based on the UW's design work. These improvements are in the central business district and are complete.
- The county worked with another property owner to facilitate façade improvements to 10 storefronts along 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the heart of the downtown White Center. The property owner financed these improvements conventionally, but was motivated to make them based on the previous façade improvements mentioned above. He is currently planning more façade improvements to other storefronts and the addition of 12-20 housing units above his commercial properties along the same street.
- King County has participated in the White Center Partners Group since 2002. The Partners Group is comprised of State and local government agencies, local non-profits, and foundations dedicated to improving social, housing, and economic conditions for low-income residents of White Center.
- King County has explored the possibility of a Transit-Oriented Development project in conjunction with U.S. Bank on its property. This mixed-use project would provide new, affordable housing units, new retail space, and a park-and-ride lot in the downtown corridor. The project is on hold until there is improvement in the general economy.

### C. Preparing the Revitalization Strategy

Due to King County's extensive partnership role in neighborhood planning efforts and the large amount of participation by community residents, stakeholders and organizations in the processes that produced the plans and reports, King County reviewed several plans and reports in preparing the revitalization strategy.

The documents reviewed included the following:

- Creating the Future: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning (1994) prepared by King County
- Progress Report: White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning(1996) prepared by King County
- 2000 Final Update, White Center Community Action Plan and Area Zoning (2001)
- White Center Community Development Investment Plan (2001) prepared by King County
- Survey Report - Survey and Inventory of Historic Resources in White Center (2002) King County Historic Preservation Program

- White Center Business District Analysis and Revitalization Plan (2002) study prepared for King County by Economic Consulting Services, Kasprisin-Pettinari Design, InsightGIS and Transportation Solutions, Inc.
- White Center Main-Street Use and Design Guidelines (2004)
- The 2006 Annual King County Growth Report (2006) prepared by King County
- The King County Consortium Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan for 2005-2007.

In addition, King County staff met with the following organizations in planning the strategy:

- The WCCDA
- North Highline Unincorporated Area Council
- White Center Chamber of Commerce
- The KCHA
- King County Consortium Joint Recommendations Committee.

King County agencies that provide services in the neighborhood were also consulted, including the following:

- King County Sheriff's Department
- King County DOT (Roads Division)
- King County DCHS
- King County BRED.

## **V. Neighborhood and Demographic Criteria**

### **A. Geographic Area Description**

The proposed NRSA is primarily residential both in use and zoning. The residential lots are mostly single family residential with pockets of multifamily properties. These lots are zoned R-6 to as high as R-48. The NRSA has three business districts, White Center, Top Hat and Salmon Creek. The business districts are centered along two main arterials, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South, both of which run north-south through the NRSA. The properties in the business districts are zoned commercial business which allows for various commercial uses including mixed-use which could provide opportunities for residential development above commercial space. The largest business district, White Center, contains some light industrial zoned properties. The businesses located in these districts are comprised primarily of



small businesses that provide services and goods to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Many of these businesses are owned by ethnic minorities and/or women, and many can be considered economically disadvantaged or underutilized enterprises. The exact boundaries of the proposed NRSA are as follows (A map of the NRSA is included in this plan as Attachment I):

- North: From 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW east along SW Roxbury to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW, east along the City of Seattle borderline to SR 509
- South: From S124<sup>th</sup> Street and SR 509 to SW 126<sup>th</sup> Street to 112<sup>th</sup> SW
- East: State Route 509 from S 99<sup>th</sup> Street to S 124<sup>th</sup> Street
- West: North from SW 126<sup>th</sup> SW along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW then west on SW 116<sup>th</sup> Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, north to SW 112<sup>th</sup> Street, west to 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW and north to SW Roxbury.

The area includes all or portions of the following contiguous census tracts:

<u>Census Tract</u>	<u>Block Group</u>
265	1, 2, 3, 4
266	1
267	1
268.01	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
268.02	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
269	1, 2
270	3

## B. Population Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the proposed NRSA has 6,022 households with a population of 16,285. In the White Center CDP (which includes White Center and the neighboring area of Boulevard Park, and had about 21,000 residents in 2000) over 21.3 percent of the population does not speak English or speaks it less than very well compared to 8.4 percent in King County as a whole. Over 45 different languages are spoken and 35.6 percent of the population speaks a language other than English in their homes. This compares to 18.4 percent for all of King County. Forty-four percent of the population rents their residences. Other demographic highlights of the NRSA are as follows:

- In 2000, 64.9 percent of the population (10,570 persons) were low to moderate-income
- In 2000, 64.9 percent of households (3,908 households) were low to moderate-income

- In 2000, 14.7 percent of the population was living below the poverty level, compared to 8.4 percent for the county as a whole
- The median family income in White Center was about 65 percent of the King County median in 2000, and average annual earnings were about 69 percent of the King County average
- In the White Center CDP, the unemployment level was 6.4 percent in 2000, nearly two percent higher than the King County average of 4.5 percent
- In 2009, King County's unemployment rate was approximately 8.5 percent. It is estimated that the unemployment rate is at least 10.5 percent in White Center.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1 below details the percentage of low to moderate-income households by Census tract and block group.

<b>Table 1.</b>							
<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Block Group</b>	<b>Total # of Households</b>	<b># Low-Mod Households</b>	<b>% Low-Mod Households</b>	<b>Total # Persons</b>	<b># Low-Mod Persons</b>	<b>% Low-Mod Persons</b>
265	1	200	200	100.0	521	425	81.6
	2	244	244	100.0	804	794	98.8
	3	214	196	91.8	594	545	91.8
	4	199	160	80.3	605	486	80.3
266	1	250	167	66.9	704	471	66.9
267	1	190	125	65.8	549	361	65.8
268.01	1	245	119	48.6	669	325	48.6
	2	643	440	68.4	1464	1002	68.4
	3	266	96	36.4	745	263	35.3
	4	401	239	59.5	1004	597	59.5
	5	452	374	82.7	1071	886	82.7
268.02	1	268	183	68.1	806	549	68.1
	2	321	188	58.6	949	556	58.6
	3	566	376	66.5	1675	1114	66.5
	4	256	116	45.2	772	349	45.2
	5	338	162	47.8	683	373	54.6
269	1	217	136	62.8	876	550	62.8
	2	309	158	51.0	616	314	51
270	3	443	229	51.8	1178	610	51.8
<i>Source: US 2000 Census</i>							

<sup>6</sup> This is based on the assumption that unemployment in White Center is still about two percent higher than the King County unemployment rate, as it was in 2000. However, given the fact that workers in White Center are lower paid and less educated than the county average, and that a significant proportion do not speak English very well, it is likely that the economic downturn has affected employment there disproportionately, and that unemployment is therefore considerably higher than this 10.5 percent estimate.

1. Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community Designation

The proposed area has not been federally designated as an Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Community. However, within the boundaries of the proposed NRSA is the White Center Community Empowerment Zone (CEZ). This is a state designation for an area that meets the unemployment and poverty criteria defined in the state of Washington's Revised Code. To qualify for state CEZ designation the area must meet three criteria including: 1) at least 51 percent of the households have incomes at or below the county median income, 2) average unemployment is at least 102 percent of the county-wide average unemployment rate, and 3) a five-year economic development plan for the area must be developed. The CEZ designation provides some relief of state business and occupation and retail sales taxes to certain businesses who locate within the area or hire residents who live in the CEZ. The CEZ encompasses parts of Census Tracts 265 and 266 and all of 268.

C. Assessment

1. Economic Conditions

The White Center NRSA is predominantly residential with single and multi-family housing surrounding a small major business district, White Center, and two smaller commercial areas, Top Hat and Salmon Creek. The area is ideally located, being surrounded by four cities (Seattle, Burien, Tukwila and SeaTac), and close to SeaTac airport, the Port of Seattle, Interstate 5 and major employers such as Boeing. However, the area has suffered from under-investment by the private sector and a high need for over-stretched public resources. The area is the most concentrated area of poverty in the King County Consortium, historically having a very large amount of public and subsidized housing and a higher than average crime rate compared to other parts of the county.

As mentioned previously, the housing stock in the neighborhood includes two large public housing communities managed by KCHA, Park Lake Homes I and II. Park Lake Homes I is the largest portion of the public housing, and is currently undergoing HOPE VI redevelopment. The new name for Park Lake Homes I is Greenbridge. The nearly-completed Greenbridge project is bringing many more residents of a variety of income levels to the area and will continue to do so over the next several years. It is hoped that the redevelopment of this very large piece of land from public housing into a vital mixed-income community will spur a fair amount of economic development activity. In addition, KCHA has also received HOPE VI funding for Park Lake II and King County is investing in the Park Lake II revitalization effort as well.

Levels of unemployment: Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, the proposed area had an unemployment rate of 6.4 percent, nearly 2 percent higher than the average of 4.5 percent in King County.<sup>7</sup> The Census also indicated that 14.7 percent of the area's population lives below the poverty level.

Number of jobs: The Washington State Employment Security Department reported that the census tracts comprising the NRSA had 3,235 jobs in 2000, about 3,112 jobs in 2005, and 3,332 jobs in 2008. This means that there was an overall job gain of about three percent from 2000 - 2008, with a higher percent gain since 2005. Some of this gain may have been lost, however, in the 2008 - 2009 recession.

Number of businesses: The White Center CDP, had over 600 businesses in 2003. It is estimated that there are over 350 businesses located within the three business districts of the NRSA. The largest, the White Center business district, is mainly a drive up retail area that is somewhat pedestrian friendly. Most of the service facilities are located in this district and includes two ethnic grocery stores, an ethnic butcher/meat market, a small independent drug store and a large regional drug store, Bartell's. Also located within this area are ethnic restaurants, beauty and nail salons, American styled bars/grills and a few office-oriented businesses and spaces.

Located just one block away from the major retail area of the White Center business district is an area that is zoned light industrial. The area includes auto repair and parts businesses, warehouse storage, a small independent brewery, blacksmith/welding shops, and the largest employer in the area, an ethnic food manufacturer.

The southern portion of the White Center business district as well as Top Hat and Salmon Creek business districts are auto-oriented, that is, the location and design of these areas encourage use of the automobile by potential customers. These business districts consist of mostly gas stations, auto repair and parts shops, and fast food restaurants.

Access to capital: The area is fortunate to be served by the branches of four large national banks. All of the banks offer complete banking services to small businesses, however, most of the businesses in the district are very small and many are owned by ethnic minorities and/or immigrants and refugees and they have been unable, or in some cases unwilling, to access capital through traditional financing methods.

Condition of businesses: The market support for retail business has continually eroded as new and larger developments have been built in adjacent areas. There

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<sup>7</sup> See footnote 6 above.

is a concentration of roughly 116,000 persons within the West Seattle/North Burien sub-region of King County. That population is isolated from the main part of King County. It is of a size consistent with community scale shopping centers, including a small one currently located near White Center called Westwood Village. There are large concentrations of regional and big box retail shopping opportunities in Seattle and Tukwila, plus competitive concentrations of retail space in other parts of West Seattle and Burien. Quantitatively, there is limited support for retail businesses in White Center and there is limited vacant space to fill. Future support and growth in retail trade will rely on reducing leakage of spending to other areas, identifying specific niches and other means to attract more retail investment, and improving the real or perceived image and safety concerns. There is little quality office space, and while none has been built, realtors report a demand for this space. The development of quality office space offers good potential for redevelopment of the White Center business district.

Housing needs of residents: Over 60 percent of the housing in the area is modest single family detached homes, many of which are rented out by absentee owners. Based upon the 2000 U.S. Census 55.9 percent of the housing stock is owner-occupied. Though a complete housing survey has not been done in the last 20 years, it appears that much of the stock is fairly well-maintained, but that there are some serious problem properties scattered throughout the community, and a fair amount of need for housing rehabilitation. Currently, 31 percent of the area's rentals are subsidized either as public housing or by a housing voucher. The HOPE VI projects of KCHA, which are being significantly supported by King County, will offer many new housing, business and community resource opportunities that are desired by the neighborhood.

In June 2004 the community-based WCCDA held a community housing forum. In addition to the forum, the organization also gathered over 100 housing surveys from residents. Through the survey and the forum residents indicated the following:

- Forty-eight percent wanted to own their own home
- Eighty-seven percent believed that the area should be a neighborhood of all income levels
- Renters wanted larger units to accommodate their extended families
- Over half of the forum attendees believed that the next major housing development should be a mixed-use project.

Availability of economic development capacity: Until 2002 when the WCCDA was formed, there was no community-based organization in the area devoted to economic development. This has limited the community's ability to carry out many of the strategies outlined in the plans developed during the past 12 years. King County staff has worked with the WCCDA to build local capacity for

economic development activities. In the last few years it has continued to partner with Highline Community College's SBDC to serve the White Center business community, and to directly serve White Center residents through King County's Job Training Initiative. The county has also completed, and continues to pursue, infrastructure projects such as parks, sidewalks, pedestrian corridors, and transit-oriented development which will improve White Center's economic viability. As the area grows with new developments and projects, there is a desire for one or more additional business associations to be formed that support the community's diverse ethnicities and cultures.

## 2. Opportunities

Based upon the work that has been done since 1994, economic development opportunities have been identified. One is the unmet demand for the following types of businesses:

- Clothing boutiques (ethnic and/or specific size)
- Miscellaneous specialty retail stores, such as antiques dealers. Stores that provide goods that can be acquired at larger retail stores do not sell
- Bookstores and newsstands
- Healthcare (medical and dental clinics, etc.)
- Veterinary facilities
- Furniture/appliance retail stores
- Ethnic-based financial institution
- Mixed-use properties (commercial and residential developments)
- Office and/or professional space
- Conversion of existing houses on commercial zoned land to commercial uses.

There are a number of organizations that are currently providing services and assistance to the community in the area of economic development. They include the following:

- The WCCDA offers technical assistance to business owners and entrepreneurs
- The SBDC at Highline Community College provides technical assistance, business training and access to capital to those enterprises that meet the small business size standards of the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC at Highline serves five cities in southwest King County besides the North Highline unincorporated area.

- The UW Business School provides technical assistance to small businesses through its Business and Economic Development Program and Retail Marketing classes.
- King County is currently working with the National Development Council and the Seattle Foundation to fund a small business loan program to make below-market rate loans to small businesses throughout the county with an emphasis on White Center firms.

To some degree, the resources noted above are currently underutilized, and while there are a number of factors and issues that account for this, the plan through the NRSA is to encourage more direct partnerships among these organizations to enhance their effectiveness in the area.

### 3. HOPE VI Projects

Phase I: The Greenbridge/Phase I redevelopment of Park Lake Homes in White Center is well under way and King County has invested significant resources into this effort. The rental housing and community services development phase of Greenbridge is now nearing completion. By fall 2009, 341 rental housing units were occupied at Greenbridge. Residents who had to relocate for the redevelopment have had the first right to return and over 50 percent have returned. The construction of the last rental phase began in spring 2009 and will finish in 2010.

Over 100,000 square feet of community service space has either been constructed or is under construction. These spaces include a new kindergarten to grade-five school, the renovated Jim Wiley Center which houses Southwest Boy's and Girls Club, Neighborhood House, Highline Community College and a community room. A new YWCA family services and career development center collocated with a King County Library branch opened in spring 2009. A regional early learning center which will provide comprehensive early learning services to the entire community is under construction and will open in late fall 2009.

Affordable home ownership will be provided by Habitat for Humanity beginning summer of 2009. Up to 400 additional units of home ownership will be built by private developers in 2010 through 2014. The \$182 million development has leveraged \$10 million in King County investment, made at the time the HOPE VI grant was awarded by HUD in 2001. Additional investment has been made in parks, trails, housing, and public infrastructure in the surrounding White Center community.

Phase II: the KCHA received \$20,000,000 in HOPE VI funds in September 2008 to revitalize Park Lake II. The Park Lake II is home to 588 residents, nearly two thirds of whom have immigrated from Africa, Eastern Europe or Southeast Asia. Many do not speak English and may not read or write their own language. Eighty-two percent of Park Lake II households live on less than 30 percent of

AMI, with average household income reaching only \$12,528. Forty-two percent of the population is youth under the age of 19.

The most cost-effective way to eliminate the physical distress that plagues Park Lake II is to demolish and replace the units, which is only financially feasible if the existing site is redeveloped. The Park Lake II units and site suffer from a myriad of conditions of severe physical deterioration. The heating system ducts are encased in the concrete foundation slabs. Due to poor site drainage and inadequate storm water management, water has infiltrated the slabs and the heating ducts. The combination of warm air and cold water produces more moisture in the units than can be ventilated by the existing system. The result is interior moisture damage that often leads to the growth of mold. Eliminating mold and maintaining a healthy living environment for residents is a constant challenge.

The KCHA will demolish and replace on-site the existing 162 severely deteriorated public housing dwelling units, as well as three non-dwelling units. Twelve workforce rental housing units will be constructed, and will be affordable to households with incomes up to 60 percent of the AMI. The project will achieve de-concentration of low-income households by selling land to homebuilders for construction of up to 138 homeownership units. First-time homebuyers with incomes between 25 percent and 60 percent of AMI will purchase up to 19 of the homeownership units through Habitat for Humanity and the remaining will be sold at market-rate. To create off-site affordable housing, the KCHA will also project-base 12 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in market-rate rental units located in east King County, a housing market with few existing affordable housing options for extremely low-income renters.

The KCHA will also construct 6,500 square feet of space for provision of community support services. The space will be designed to accommodate a wide variety of uses, and will include a large community room with kitchen, the Neighborhood Networks Center, offices for a variety of community support service providers, and a multi-purpose room. The goal of the community services support program is to bring services on-site to improve access by residents. The KCHA will partner with 11 social service agencies to deliver the community support services program.

As the Greenbridge community moves close to completion, and Phase II moves forward, the KCHA is working to attract new businesses, including opportunities for neighborhood entrepreneurs that will be interested in locating in the community due to the large changes occurring through the HOPE VI projects and parallel investments in the neighborhood.

#### **D. Problems**



There are a number of issues that the community will face as it implements revitalization strategies. They include the following:

- Until 2002, when the WCCDA was formed, there was no community-based development organization in the area. The mission of the WCCDA is economic development, preservation/creation of affordable housing and community advocacy. While the WCCDA is established, it is still a young organization, and the staff and board do not yet have experience in developing and managing economic development projects, such as mixed-use and commercial properties.
- The crime rate in the area continues to be a struggle and there is a perception that the area is unsafe.
- The three business districts are distinct and geographically separated and may require separate economic development strategies and actions.
- Though new investment has been made in several commercial properties recently, many sites are owned by long-time owners who have very little incentive to make major upgrades to storefronts and tenant improvements.
- There is a perception that gentrification will occur in the business districts and increase rents. Many small businesses pay rents that are below those spaces in the surrounding cities. Owners fear as property and infrastructure is improved, rents will increase and price them out of the area.

## **VI. Economic Empowerment Plan**

### **A. Economic Empowerment Strategies Planned for 2004 - 2009**

During the next five years, the following strategies will be undertaken with the goals of creating jobs and economic opportunities, and revitalizing the neighborhood and its business areas.

- Provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs and business owners. Through partnerships with the WCCDA, the SBDC at Highline Community College, the UW, and the potential small business loan program mentioned above, business, financial planning and marketing assistance, as well as access to capital, will be offered to business owners operating a business in the proposed NRSA.
- Assist business owners with façade/tenant improvements. Much of this work has been completed, but the small business loan program will make façade improvement loans available, if there is demand, to make improvements that will enhance businesses and create job opportunities for low to moderate-income persons.
- Assist the community with any need for a new business association/organization in the area that will focus on the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse business owners. Conversations with business owners indicate there is a need for

a culturally sensitive business organization in the area. One such organization has started but over the past year appears to be inactive. In partnership with the Business Assistance Center located at the WCCDA inquiries will be made to the business owners to determine the viability of this type of organization for the area.

- Provide training to residents of the NRSA who wish to start a business venture. In partnership with the UW's School of Business, the SBDC at Highline, the WCCDA and possibly the local Chamber of Commerce, workshops or seminars will be presented in the area for residents interested in starting a business.
- Link job opportunities with local residents, especially low-moderate income persons. The King County Jobs Initiative will provide vocational training, job placement and retention services for low income persons in the proposed NRSA, increasing opportunities for employment and job retention.
- Provide Section 108 loan assistance for economic development opportunities within the NRSA. King County will continue to pursue 108 development opportunities for the White Center business district.
- Work with community partners to create new mixed-use and mixed-income housing opportunities, and to improve the overall housing stock, including investments in revitalizing Park Lake I and Park Lake II. King County will work with the White Center WCCDA, Impact Capital, the KCHA and other housing development entities. Through the use of HOME, CDBG and other fund sources, as well as other development incentives, the county will support the creation of new affordable housing, specifically including low-income and workforce housing serving households earning 80 percent or less of the area median gross income, and to expand housing repair services in the neighborhood.
- Work with the DOT's Transit Oriented Development Program (TOD) to locate a TOD project in the NRSA. The TOD project would be a mixed-use, mixed income project that would combine commuter parking, commercial space and mixed-income housing within the White Center neighborhood business district. The design of TOD projects promotes walkable business districts with wider sidewalks, better lighting and shared parking. King County was working with U.S. Bank to locate a TOD on the bank's current branch site, but the current recession has stalled those planning efforts. Once the economy recovers, King County will reengage U.S. Bank to resume TOD discussions.
- Work with community partners on the 98<sup>th</sup> Street initiative to create a safe and well-lit walking connection between the business district and the dense housing at Greenbridge. King County will work with community partners to create safe walking spaces that connect residents with transit and businesses, and through such projects, improve the economic development of the neighborhood. The first phase of this project is funded and under construction.
- Reduce crime rate in the neighborhood through the combined efforts of these activities.

## B. Economic Empowerment Implementation through 2009

- In 2005, the county rezoned several properties from an industrial to a commercial zone. This rezone enhanced the value of the properties and made them attractive for retail/office and mixed-use projects.
- In 2006, the King County completed the replacement of sidewalks on four blocks in the central business district at a cost of \$1.19 million. 120 pieces of community-designed artwork were integrated into this project. Existing parking was reconfigured to provide greater safety and access to businesses.
- In 2006, King County received a \$325,000 State Enhancement Grant to design a safe and attractive pedestrian corridor along SW 98<sup>th</sup> Street to better link the new Greenbridge (HOPE VI) residential community with the central business district. Design was completed in 2008, and construction began in the summer of 2009 with completion slated for 2010. The project will cost about \$2 million with King County funding at least 50 percent.
- As mentioned above, in 2008, the KCHA received a \$20 million HOPE VI grant to reconstruct Park Lake Homes II. The project will cost \$70 million with King County contributing \$6 million for infrastructure improvements.
- In 2008, King County issued a Request For Qualifications for nonprofit or private development of affordable housing on two surplus properties in White Center. When developed, these properties will produce about 55 new units of affordable housing. Construction should take place in 2010.
- In 2009, HUD approved a \$6.25 million 108 Guaranteed Loan to King County for funding a new \$11 million 26,000 square foot retail development on the largest vacant parcel in downtown White Center. Construction began in the summer of 2009 and will be complete in late 2010. The project will significantly contribute to the redevelopment of the downtown, provide new services to White Center's large low income population, and create about 60 new jobs.
- The solely locally-funded King County Jobs Initiative has served low-income adults in White Center since 1998. The jobs initiative services include recruitment, skill assessment, case management, enrollment into vocational training, job placement and retention, and support services. During 2008, 53 clients were served with 47 placed in jobs averaging \$11.69 per hour with benefits. The one-year retention rate for clients placed in jobs is 96 percent. The initiative one of the only employment and training programs that has funds to pay for training. Beginning in 2010, however, the jobs initiative will focus on job services for ex-offenders. Some of these may be White Center residents, but it is not clear how many.

## VII. Performance Measures

The strategies outlined above are designed to create economic development activities that will revitalize the business districts of the NRSA, provide a viable retail and service area for the surrounding residential areas and create job opportunities for residents. The goal

is that the outcomes of these strategies will result in the economic empowerment of low to moderate-income residents and a community that has diverse and vibrant business districts. The King County Housing and Community Development Program will be the lead entity responsible for reporting on the benchmarks to be achieved over the five-year period of the plan, which will be effective once it is appended to the King County Consortium Consolidated Plan.

The desired outcomes and benchmarks include:

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Baseline Data</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
Provide support to and partner with organizations to provide technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners	Businesses are stable, able to expand and hire more staff.	There are approximately 350 businesses in the NRSA and over 600 in the CDP. Many of these need help with financial, marketing, operations, and staffing in order to position themselves better to recapture the retail spending leakage from White Center.	Total number of businesses will remain stable or increase. The partners in this effort will provide technical assistance to 25 entrepreneurs and business owners to help achieve this.
Assist property owners and business owners with façade/tenant improvements.	Deteriorated storefront facades are upgraded to a presentable and marketable appearance.	Many buildings in the central business district were built in the 1920s and 1930s and the storefronts are in extremely deteriorated conditions.	Provide technical assistance and/or funding to improve the storefronts of 30 - 40 businesses. (20 to 30 storefronts / facades have already been upgraded. Efforts continue)
Assist the community with any need for a new business association/organization in the area that will focus on the needs of culturally and ethnically diverse business owners.	If feasible and desirable, such an organization is established.	No such organization is active at this time.	Explore and analyze need for and viability of such an organization. An organization will be established if appropriate.
Provide training to residents of the NRSA who wish to start a business venture.	Residents start new businesses in White Center.	Approximately 350 businesses exist in the NRSA. There is no current data available on how many residents wish to start a business, however, unemployment is high in the neighborhood, so there is some	Growth in the number of businesses from 2005 – 2015. Recruit participants and provide 10 workshops or

Strategy	Outcome	Baseline Data	Benchmark
		motivation and a willing workforce to start new businesses.	seminars on business development to residents over the next five years.
Provide training and employment opportunities to low-income residents.	Area residents have access to jobs that provide a wage of at least \$9.00/ hour with benefits.	Nearly 15 percent of the area's population lived below the poverty level in 2000. Unemployment is currently over 10 percent, well above the county average	Unemployment in the NRSA declines and becomes comparable to countywide rate. 150 residents are placed in livable wage jobs by the end of the NRSA plan period.
Provide Section 108 loan assistance for economic development opportunities within the NRSA.	Neighborhood is revitalized through economic development project that creates living wage jobs.	There were 3,112 jobs in the NRSA in 2005. Not all of these were living wage jobs. Nearly 15 percent of the area's population lived below the poverty level in 2000. Unemployment is currently over 10 percent, well above the county average.	The total number of jobs in the White Center area is increased from 2005 level, and the poverty rate declines from 2000 level. At least 60 living wage jobs are created in the NRSA.
Work with community partners to create new mixed-use and mixed-income housing opportunities, specifically including low-income and workforce housing serving households earning 80 or less of the area median gross income, and to improve the overall housing stock.	Neighborhood is revitalized through new and improved housing stock.	Park Lake II had 162 deteriorating public housing units in 2008, with a high concentration of households in poverty. There is no current data on the number of other homes needing repair, but efforts will be made to identify homeowners who qualify for home repair and weatherization programs.  Several underutilized properties in the community have been identified for potential housing use.	By 2014, at least 150 new mixed-income rental and ownership units will be built to replace the deteriorated units at Park Lake II, with another 12 units of rental vouchers provided to very low income households. 341 mixed-income rental units and other ownership housing units will have been

Strategy	Outcome	Baseline Data	Benchmark
			completed at Greenbridge.  50 housing units are repaired/improved.
Work with the Department of Transportation's Transit Oriented Development Program (TOD) to locate a TOD project in the NRSA.	Smart urban design that promotes the use of public transportation is incorporated into the neighborhood.	There is currently no TOD in White Center, although there are several bus routes available.	TOD project is successfully located in White Center business area.
Work with community partners on the 96 <sup>th</sup> Street initiative to create a safe and well-lit walking connection between the business district and the residential neighborhood, including the new housing at Greenbridge.	Smart and safe walkways that encourage walking in the community and to the local business district.	There is no safe pedestrian connection from the new Greenbridge development to the Central Business District.	98 <sup>th</sup> Street walking connection is completed and provides a safe and convenient pedestrian connection.
Reduce crime rate in the area through combination of above activities.	Crime rate reduced through focus on shared streets and positive use of public spaces	Staff will identify baseline measure from King County Sheriff.	Crime rate reduced by 10%.